

# NASW-MA CHAPTER: AWARD CEREMONY 2022

The NASW Massachusetts Chapter is hosting its **49th Annual Awards Celebrations** virtually on Thursday, December 1, 2022, to celebrate and recognize this year's honoree, as well as their achievements, dedication, and support to our social work community.

**Virtual ceremony** | Ticket: \$35 per person

**Thursday, December 1**  
**6:00 - 7:30pm EST | on Zoom**

## Ceremony agenda:

- 6:00 - 6:05pm: Ceremony begins
- 6:05 - 6:15pm: Welcome Remarks by Rebekah Gewirtz, Executive Director
- 6:15 - 6:20pm: Award presentations
- 7:30pm: Ceremony ends

## 2022 Award Honorees:

- Beverly Ross Fliegel Social Policy & Change: Rebecca Jackson, MSW
- Greatest Contribution To Social Work: Susan Harris O'Connor, MSW, LICSW
- Emerging Leader: Marie Mathieu, MSW, LICSW
- Lifetime Achievement: Norma Wassel, LICSW
- Public Citizen Of The Year: Gordon Donkoh-Halm

**Did you know** you can place a congratulatory banner/message on our Awards's website to show support to an honoree? See details below:

- Full Banner Ad \$175 (1125px by 300px, PNG only)
- Half Banner Ad \$100 (1125px by 150px, PNG only)
- 70-Word Message \$50 (text only)

For questions about the ceremony, email our Program Manager at [cmedinaadames.naswma@socialworkers.org](mailto:cmedinaadames.naswma@socialworkers.org)



**Rebecca Jackson**



**Susan Harris O'Connor**



**Marie Mathieu**



**Norma Wassel**



**Gordon Donkoh-Halm**

**[WWW.NASWMA.ORG/AWARDS2022](http://WWW.NASWMA.ORG/AWARDS2022)**



## MEET OUR HONOREES:

### Beverly Ross Fliegel Social Policy & Change Award:

#### Rebecca Jackson, MSW

Rebecca Jackson is a clinically trained facilitator and teacher. She began her career as a pastor of a small independent church in Mattapan from 1999-2005. She then took her love for teaching, leading and supporting communities of color to Simmons College Graduate School of Social Work. At Simmons she began her work facilitating dialogue around issues of race and identity and how it shows up in clinical work. Rebecca completed her MSW in 2009, and since then has spent her career working with young people and families who have experienced trauma.



Rebecca Jackson is a clinically trained facilitator and teacher. She began her career as a pastor of a small independent church in Mattapan from 1999-2005. She then took her love for teaching, leading and supporting communities of color to Simmons College Graduate School of Social Work. At Simmons she began her work facilitating dialogue around issues of race and identity and how it shows up in clinical work. Rebecca completed her MSW in 2009, and since then has spent her career working with young people and families who have experienced trauma. She joined Trinity Boston Foundation in November 2012 and began to lead Trinity's pursuit of racial equity in its internal functioning. Rebecca has continued to lead that work and now supports various organizations throughout Boston, as they strive to live out racial equity, trauma inclusion, and restorative justice practices. Rebecca has a passion for creating spaces where people can learn, grow and have difficult conversations. She also teaches at schools of social work and education in and around Boston.

### Greatest Contribution To Social Work Award:

#### Susan Harris O'Connor, MSW, LICSW

Susan Harris O'Connor has worked full-time in the social service profession for over 35 years. When not at work she continues to dedicate her time to a topic that is at the core of her existence. Susan spent her first year of life in foster care and was transracially adopted in 1964. Her adoptive Jewish parents were one of the first white couples in Massachusetts to adopt Black children, adopting a son in 1960. In an effort to make sense of a complicated experience and identity, Susan began writing autobiographical narratives. These narratives would eventually be compiled to create The Harris Narratives: An Introspective Study of a Transracial Adoptee 2012.



Since 1996, her narratives have been used as teaching tools throughout the country to further people's understanding of transracial adoption. Susan is best known for her original style of presenting and for being a pioneer in the creation of a racial identity model that beautifully holds a multi-faceted and fluid racial identity, allowing for a transracial adoptee who is genetically one or multiple races to also be able to feel and claim that of another race(s). Susan's narratives have been performed over 100 times as keynote addresses, lectures, trainings and featured performances at places such as Harvard Medical School Conference series, Wendy's Wonderful Kids Summit/The Dave Thomas Foundation, Cambridge Series, Smith College Summer Lecture series, Yale Law, UMass Medical Center for nurses and social workers, Boston University Medical Campus/ Psychiatry Grand Rounds and CMPT, The Judicial Branch and the Office of the Child Advocate of Connecticut, The Governor's Commission on Child Placement in Foster Care and Adoption for the State of Rhode Island, Massachusetts General Hospital/Archway, NAACP, American Adoption Congress, NACAC, Worcester State University, West Chester University, William James College/Brown Bag Discussion Series, Boston College School of Social Work, Starbucks Coffee, PACT Camps West and East, Umoja Camp, Caribbean Heritage Camp, and KAAAN. Published by Yale Journal of Law and Feminism and British Journal, Adoption and Fostering, Susan is also the co-editor of Black Anthology: Adult Adoptees Claim Their Space 2016.

Susan is the recipient of the 2019 Outstanding Contributions to the Field of Social Work Award from Boston University School of Social Work, 2018 Distinguished Professional Achievement Alumni Award from Worcester State University, 2016 President's Award from American Adoption Congress and 2014 Outstanding Practitioner in Adoption Award from St. John's University in collaboration with Montclair State University.

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## MEET OUR HONOREES:

### Emerging Leader Award:

#### Marie Mathieu, MSW, LICSW

Marie Mathieu is a clinical social worker who has spent her 15 year career working in various systems. As the library social worker for Cambridge Public Library and an advisor at the Boston College School of Social Work, she continues to bring social work values to whatever space she's in. Prior to coming to the library Marie spent 5 years creating and developing the Mental Health Court out of Cambridge District Court. Marie prioritizes person-centered approaches and community partnerships in all of her work. She earned her BSW and MSW from Andrews University and enjoys communicating in Haitian-Creole and Spanish.



### Lifetime Achievement Award:

#### Norma Wassel, LICSW

Norma Wassel has always viewed social work as a means of living her values and providing the opportunity to work in an advocacy role for social justice and human rights. This has involved developing a wide range of professional skills in community organizing, social policy, teaching, and direct clinical practice and integrating these into her work. Active in the Prisoners' Rights Movement, she worked on this issue in both New York City and California after getting her MSW from Columbia University. Related work in Mass included developing a model for our state's public defender agency for holistic defense which integrated social workers into a client's legal team.



During this time she was awarded the agency's Thurgood Marshall Award which "recognizes an individual who pushed for lasting, equitable changes in the legal system and societal structures that affect our clients and client communities." Norma also co-founded the Massachusetts Bail Fund and the Women and Incarceration Project at the Center for Women's Health and Human Rights. Another significant area of work has been in community mental health. While at Bay Cove Human Services, where she later served as Assistant Director of the Mental Health Division, Norma was instrumental in the development of prototypes for service models, such as the first fully bilingual, bicultural residential programs funded by the Dept. of Mental Health. Another example of innovative projects was her co-founding of Cambridge Cohousing, a multi-generational, mixed-income, and diverse-ability community designed with social supports, where she still lives. Norma also continues to be involved in social work on an international level. A primary focus has been on assisting in the development of social work in former Soviet Union republics during their transition to independence.

### Public Citizen Of The Year Award:

#### Gordon Donkoh-Halm

Gordon Donkoh-Halm is the Founder and Executive Director of the African Community Center of Lowell. He holds a master's degree in Peace and Conflict Studies from UMass Lowell and now served as a board member for the UMass Lowell Greeley Scholar for Peace and Conflict Studies and co-chair for two years. He previously worked at the International Institute of New England Lowell branch helping with refugee resettlement as a youth case specialist and community cultural orientation instructor. He worked as a parent liaison at Lowell Community Charter Public School where he established African Heritage Day at the school, a celebration that continues till this day.



Gordon also has experience working with children with developmental disabilities. He volunteers his time as a fence viewer for the town of Dracut helping to resolve disputes around boundaries and occasionally mediates at Lowell District Court. He also served on the Board of Trustees for Innovation Academy Charter School from 2016-2021. He is the founder of the African Festival in Lowell, a free annual festival that attracts thousands of community members and partners to showcase diversity and inclusion. He recently was chosen as the recipient for the Cultural Heritage Excellence award by the Lowell National Historical Park and has also been elected as the Co-Chair of UMass Lowell Greeley Scholar Committee. In May 2019, he was among the IINE 100 honorees which he received an award.

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